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COLONEL JOHN BROWN,

HIS SERVICES IN THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR,
BATTLE OF STONE ARABIA.

BY

REV. GARRET L. ROOF, D. D.

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At the conclusion of the address of the Rev. GARRET L. ROOF, D. D., upon the civil and military services of JOHN BROWN during the revolutionary war, delivered by special request before the Oneida Historical Society at Utica, on the evening of April 28th, 1884, it was unanimously resolved, on motion of JOHN F. SEYMOUR, that the thanks of the Society be returned to Mr. Roof for his able and interesting address, and that he be requested to furnish a copy to the Society for publication.

M. M. BAGG,

Recording Secretary.

BY TRANSFER

JUN 3 1910

COLONEL JOHN BROWN.

HIS SERVICES IN THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR—BATTLE OF
STONE ARABIA.

The residents of the Mohawk valley will ever feel a deep interest in the career of Colonel John Brown, who in the fall of 1780, under the inspiration of a lofty patriotism, came with his Berkshire Levies to this valley, to protect its fields from pillage, its dwellings from conflagration, and its early settlers from the cruelty of a savage foe. This interest is doubtless enhanced by the consideration that when he first engaged actively in the business pursuits of life, he was a resident of this valley, and that he fell while fighting heroically on one of its battle-fields, near which his ashes now repose.

It may be proper here to remark that we are not to judge of the importance of the battles of the Revolution by the numbers engaged, but by the issues involved therein, which certainly were among the most momentous in this world's history.

We should then love to trace the glorious events in the lives of that little band of patriotic men who first raised the standard of resistance to British oppression; and by the wisdom of their counsels and their valor in the battle-field, secured for us the blessings of constitutional liberty.

It may not prove an easy undertaking to present the principal events in the life of Colonel John Brown with clearness, and in chronological order, as in the presentation of them, we will have to rely much on tradition.

And to tradition we should not always attach the fullest credence, even when supplemented by the written statements of persons whose lives were contemporaneous with the events they aimed to describe; for such statements, though honestly made, will sometimes be found to conflict to a greater or less extent with each

other. Hence are we often embarrassed by the scantiness of authentic materials for the faithful delineation of the characters of many of the heroic men of the war of our independence.

Among the patriots of the Revolution who, in the Mohawk valley, freely presented their lives as an offering on the altar of their country, was John Brown.

In the account I shall here give of this intrepid defender of the rights of the colonists, that this sketch may not be extended to too great a length, it will be my aim to present only what I regard as the most important and best authenticated events in his civil and military career.*

John Brown, who was the youngest of five brothers, was born October 19th, 1744, at Haverhill, in the State of Massachusetts.

BROWN STUDIES LAW.

He was graduated at Yale College in 1771. Soon after his graduation he became a law student in the office of his brother-in-law, the Hon. Oliver Arnold, at Providence, Rhode Island. After finishing his legal studies, he commenced the practice of the law at Caughnawaga (now Fonda) in this State, where he was appointed one of the attorneys for King George the Third. After a brief residence at this place, with a heart glowing with the enthusiasm of the times, he dismissed Coke and Littleton and the pursuits of civil and criminal jurisprudence, that he might be more active in the service of his country, and took up his residence at Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Here he soon engaged in the patriot cause. At this time the dispute between the colonies and Great Britain had assumed a threatening aspect. Taxation without representation was regarded by the colonists as an invasion of chartered rights, and as a direct violation of the British constitution. In fact, so

*The principal authorities consulted in the preparation of this address are as follows: "Campbell's Annals of Tryon County," "Lossing's Field Book of the Revolution," "Thatcher's Military Journal," "The Frontiersmen of New York," "Hough's Northern Invasion," "History of Berkshire County," "Stone's Life of Brandt," "Manuscript of Hon. Jacob Snell," "Relations of Henry Brown (son of Col. Brown), at personal interviews," besides traditional accounts from living witnesses.

determined at this time had become the spirit of hostility in this country to British aggressions, and so wide the breach between Great Britain and the colonies, as to lead John Adams to declare that "the trumpet of the Revolution had already been sounded."

During this excited state of the public mind, John Brown at once attracted attention by his commanding talents and by that love of country which was ever with him an inspiration, and which so signally marked his subsequent career.

HE BECOMES A MEMBER OF THE COUNTY AND PROVINCIAL CONGRESSES.

In 1744 he was chosen a delegate to what was then termed "a county congress," which convened at Stockbridge on the 6th July of that year. In that body, which was composed of very able men, he was appointed, with four other members, a committee to make a report on the obnoxious acts of the British Parliament, and their report was unanimously adopted. On the 11th October of the same year, he was chosen a representative from Pittsfield to the Provincial congress, which assembled at Concord. In December he was appointed by that body, with Dr. Joseph Warren, Samuel Adams, and others, a committee to open a correspondence with leading men in Canada friendly to the American cause, and to John Brown was committed "the difficult and dangerous task of sounding the disposition of the Canadians, instituting a Revolutionary party among them, and organizing a system of secret communication with its leaders."

BROWN'S FIRST CANADIAN EXPEDITION.

Upon the acceptance of his appointment as envoy to Canada, he resigned his seat in the Provincial congress and started without delay on his Canadian mission. After encountering many perils and enduring many severe hardships, he reached Montreal, where he met with a cordial reception from the committee of correspondence which had been organized in that city, and also from a delegation from Quebec. From them he learned, as he states, "that

the military commanders in the service of the king were intriguing to array the Canadian savages against the colonists; that there was no prospect of Canada sending delegates to the Continental congress, and that without the presence of a colonial army there would be no probability of an uprising there for the colonists."

This information he communicated without delay by letter to Dr. Joseph Warren and Samuel Adams, of the committee of correspondence.

ENGAGED IN THE CAPTURE OF FORT TICONDEROGA.

He suggested to the committee in the same letter the importance (should hostilities be commenced) of seizing as soon as possible the Fortress of Ticonderoga. The suggestion of the importance of seizing that post (as says the author of the History of Pittsfield) "was highly creditable to the political and military sagacity of Mr. Brown."

I will not stop here to dwell upon all the measures projected for the capture of the celebrated Fortress of Lake Champlain, which for a long time, in the new England States, had been regarded as the Key of Canada. Mr. Brown was decidedly of the opinion that the Green Mountain Boys were the persons who should be employed in the projected attack upon Ticonderoga; and that Ethan Allen was the most suitable person to command them in this important enterprise. Suffice it here to say, that Colonel Ethan Allen soon received directions from the General Assembly of Connecticut to surprise and take the Fortress of Ticonderoga; and that in obedience to these directions, this brilliant exploit was accomplished before sunrise on the morning of the 10th May, 1775, when the Fortress was surrendered to that intrepid commander in compliance with his famous demand made "IN THE NAME OF THE GREAT JEHOVAH AND OF THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS." John Brown, who was personally engaged in this bold enterprise, and whose name was honorably mentioned in Colonel Allen's official report, was immediately sent to announce the surrender of the Fortress to the Continental Congress. We next

hear of him in the First Canadian campaign in which he rendered important service to the colonies.

HIS SECOND CANADIAN EXPEDITION.

He now held the rank of major, and on the 24th July, 1775, duly commissioned, he set out on his second expedition to Canada, "to obtain," as he said, in his letter to Governor Trumbull, "the fullest intelligence of the military operations making by the King's troops, the Canadians and the Indians; to learn the situation of St. Johns, Chamblee, Montreal and Quebec; and the number of troops with which each was garrisoned; whether the Canadians designed taking up arms against the colonies; and whatever else it was of consequence, that an invading army should know." In this expedition Major Brown took with him a Canadian and three other men as guides; and had a long, tedious and an exceedingly perilous journey down the west side of Lake Champlain, through fields flooded by the lake, and also through extensive marshes, in which he was often compelled to camp at night. He had not traveled many days before it was suspected that he was a colonial emissary; and, to clear himself so far as possible, from all harmful suspicions, he professed to be a dealer in horses, and while engaged in this new vocation (in which it is not recorded that he had much success, as he seemed to have less dexterity as a horse dealer than skill as a diplomatist,) he went through the country, and learned much by secret conferences with French Canadians, and in various other ways, of the true state of Canadian affairs.

Not a few French Canadians, however, who were friendly to the American cause were sagacious enough to discover (as says one account,) and they so declared, that our American envoy was "an odd sort of a jockey, as he never got a nag to his liking." This account further states that "he was sometimes hotly pursued by a military force, and that on one occasion, a large squad of red-coats surrounded the house in which he lodged, from which he contrived to escape by a back window, and make good his flight." After many perilous adventures, "hair-breadth 'scapes," and sleepless

nights, Major Brown arrived at Crown Point on the 10th day of August, having obtained much valuable and important information for the American army. A full account of his adventures in this Canadian expedition would read somewhat like a legendary tale.

BROWN CAPTURES FORT CHAMBLEE.

Passing by matters of less interest in the career of Major Brown, (not to speak of the unsuccessful attempt to capture Montreal, the plan for the capture of which was proposed by Major Brown; but was not carried into successful execution by Colonel Allen,) we next hear of his brilliant operations at Fort Chamblee on the River Sorel. He had been intrusted by General Montgomery, (who was then engaged in the siege of St. Johns,) with the important undertaking of capturing that strongly constructed Fortress. Accordingly, on the 18th October, 1775, on a very dark night, under the directions of Brown, cannon were placed on bateaux and taken silently past the fortifications to the head of the Chamblee Rapids, and were soon put in position for attack. In fact the Fortress was now closely invested and at the mercy of Brown. Fifty Americans and four hundred Canadians were engaged in this expedition. The commander of the Fortress, Major Stopford, was suddenly aroused from his slumbers near midnight by a demand from Major Brown to surrender. The British Major had doubtless retired to his lodgings that night regarding his Fortress as a second Gibraltar. He believed that its massive walls could successfully resist any assault that might be made upon them; and that the Americans could not approach them with artillery, as the guns of the Fortress of St. Johns commanded the River Sorel on both sides for the distance of ten or twelve miles. Inexpressibly great, then, must have been his surprise (when awakened by the summons of Major Brown to surrender) to find the Fortress so closely invested and himself and his garrison fixed in such a state of "unpleasantness." Yet unpleasantly situated as Major Stopford was, he submitted the following modest proposals to the demands of Major Brown:

“The garrison should not be made prisoners, but should be permitted to march out with drums beating and colors flying; with their arms and accoutrements; and twenty-four rounds of ammunition each; and carts and provisions sufficient to pass by the shortest route to Montreal or any other place in the province at the option of Major Stopford.”

This document is certainly a model of its kind; and it may be difficult to find its like among the memorabilia of military events.

Burgoyne once boastfully declared that “*Britons never retreat.*” When effectually hemmed in near Bemus Heights, confronted by the troops of Gates, to meet whom again in battle in the condition he then was, would have resulted in the destruction of his own army; with large detachments in his rear, cutting off his supplies, and with still other obstacles multiplying in that direction, Burgoyne could neither get back to Canada, as he desired to do by a hasty retreat, nor could he advance by a forced march to Albany, and there according to his declared purpose, “*eat his Christmas dinner.*”

Equally embarrassing on the dark night of the 18th of October was the situation of that son of Mars, the redoubtable Major Stopford. To abandon Fort Chamblee and attempt to retreat with his garrison under the cover of the night, would have been with him a futile undertaking. Equally futile would have been any attempt on his part to advance on the beleaguering force of Brown.

But the American Major was not to be influenced by “the option” or modest proposals of Major Stopford, and like a celebrated commander of later days, refused to consent to any terms but an unconditional surrender; and accordingly on the morning of the 19th the Fortress with its garrison was surrendered unconditionally.

The fruits of this bold and successful exploit (besides the surrender of the Fortress) were one Major, three Captains, three Lieutenants, a Commissary and a Surgeon, eighty-three non-commissioned officers and privates of the Royal Fusilleers, besides a large quantity of stores, including one hundred and thirty-four

barrels of gunpowder, which were of almost incalculable value to our needy and ill-disciplined army. At this time General Philip Schuyler addressed a letter to the Continental Congress, in which he stated, that Major Brown "during the past year had rendered extraordinary service."

ENGAGED IN THE SECOND CANADIAN CAMPAIGN.

Major Brown was also engaged in the second Canadian campaign. On the 31st December, 1775, he participated in the memorable attack on Quebec, in which General Richard Montgomery fell, and although he fell not like Wolfe or Epaminondas, in "the arms of victory," yet he exhibited in his brief career that sublime heroism and true nobility of character which have rendered his name immortal.

Major Brown was directed to co-operate by making a false attack upon the walls to the south of St. John's gate, and to set fire to the gate with combustibles prepared for that purpose, which duty he successfully performed. And during the subsequent siege of the city he occupied an advanced post with the soldiers under his command.

On the 1st August, 1776, Congress voted him the commission of Lieutenant Colonel, with rank and pay in the Continental army from November, 1775.

EXTRAORDINARY INTERVIEW BETWEEN BROWN AND ARNOLD.

It became well known about this time that an unfriendly feeling existed between Brown and Arnold. Brown had learned much of Arnold's base character and low intrigues.

An account of an extraordinary interview between these two military men, though doubtless familiar to most readers of American history, should not be omitted here. I summarize it from a more detailed account given by Colonel Stone, in his *Life of Brandt*.

When Arnold was quartered at Albany, during the winter of 1776-1777, a difficulty arose between him and Brown, which re-

sulted in the publication by the latter of a handbill attacking Arnold. The handbill contained these severe and scathing words: "MONEY IS THIS MAN'S GOD, AND TO GET ENOUGH OF IT HE WOULD SACRIFICE HIS COUNTRY." The handbill was read aloud at Arnold's quarters, and in his presence. Arnold at once pronounced Brown a scoundrel, and declared further that he would kick him whenever and wheresoever he should meet him. Brown saw Major Lewis, one of his most intimate friends, in the evening of the day when the handbill was issued, and then obtained from him an invitation to dine with his mess on the morrow, hoping at that time to meet Arnold. On the next day, shortly before dinner would be served, Brown arrived and was ushered at once into the room where Arnold was standing with his back to the fire. Brown then deliberately approached Arnold, and, looking him directly in the eye, observed: "*I understand that you have said you would kick me. I now present myself to give you an opportunity to put your threat into execution.*" Arnold was silent. Brown then added: "*You are a dirty scoundrel.*" Arnold still remained silent, whereupon, after a short pause, Brown apologized to the gentlemen present for his intrusion, and left the room.

I will not attempt to explain this continued silence on the part of Arnold, who was personally brave and had a very resentful disposition. The language employed by Brown on this occasion and in the presence of several gentlemen, had doubtless the possible merit of being sufficiently direct and explicit, but it was not such language as might have been expected from a gentleman of his refined manners and his well-known amiability of disposition. But it should be borne in mind that he had already endured much from the persecution of Arnold, and it may less surprise us then, that under a keen sense of the injustice done him by that bold, bad man, he should, in the employment of terms on this occasion, have transcended somewhat the limits of a gentlemanly propriety. With a *mens conscia recti*, he feared not to express publicly his opinion of the man who, he believed, would prove a traitor to the American cause; for it was as true of Colonel Brown as it was of Chevalier Bayard, that "he was without fear and without reproach."

Colonel Brown was a remarkably sagacious man; and it seems was the first person to detect and comprehend the true character of Arnold.

During the Canadian campaigns he had learned much of Arnold's profligacy, his base arts of dissimulation, his malignant disposition, his lavish expenditures of money fraudulently obtained, and the shallowness of his patriotism. He regarded him as a second Catiline "who made money his God," and harbored treasonable designs against his country, for he could not fail to discover in the character of Catiline and Arnold many strong points of resemblance.

The historian Sallust in his "Catiline Conspiracy," speaks of the arch Roman traitor in the following terms: "He was of a disposition equally profligate and depraved." "He was expert in all the arts of simulation and dissimulation, and covetous of what belonged to others." "His disposition naturally violent was hurried to the execution of his design by the consciousness of his crime." What the Roman historian said of Catiline proved equally true of Arnold.

BROWN'S IMPORTANT SERVICES DURING THE BURGOYNE CAMPAIGN.

During the early part of the Campaign of Burgoyne, in consequence of the plottings of Arnold, Colonel Brown was not engaged in active service, but he could not long remain unemployed while his country was struggling to shake off the yoke of British domination.

He accordingly on his own account raised a regiment of militia, which he hoped in a short time to lead into the service of his country. The opportunity was soon presented. Colonel Brown was ordered by General Lincoln "to proceed to Lake George and destroy the British stores collected there, and release the American prisoners for whom that port had been made the depot."

This was an enterprise that greatly suited the adventurous spirit of Brown. With a detachment of 500 men he left Pittsfield, and soon reached Pawlet, the headquarters of General Lincoln.

From Pawlet on the 13th September, 1777, with his usual promptitude, he started on his expedition, and proceeding to the north end of Lake George, from the 13th to the 18th September, he had passed up Lake George, and captured all the outworks between its Northern Landing place and the main Fort at Ticonderoga (including Mount Hope, Mount Defiance, and the old French lines), an armed brig, several gun boats, 200 bateaux, five cannon and small arms in proportion to the number of captured soldiers. He had made 298 prisoners, besides the officers and crews of the Flotilla. He had released 100 American soldiers, and retaken the Continental flag which General St. Clair had left behind him at Ticonderoga in his great haste to evacuate that Fortress. The guns at Mount Defiance were then turned upon the Fortress at Ticonderoga, but without a successful result; and an attack made on the 24th on Diamond Island was also unsuccessful. In this expedition with the loss of only three killed and five wounded, Brown had fallen upon the rear of Burgoyne's army, and had virtually cut off his communication with Canada and his means for supplying his troops. This brilliant exploit was regarded as an event of the highest importance by the American army, and was certainly an essential link in the chain of events that soon rendered the surrender of Burgoyne inevitable.

INVASION OF THE MOHAWK VALLEY.

We now pass over a period of about three years in the life of Colonel Brown in which but little is recorded of the nature and scenes of his activities; and find the field of his military operations transferred to the Valley of the Mohawk.

In the fall of 1780, Sir John Johnson resolved upon the destruction of the settlements of the Schoharie and Mohawk valleys. His force consisting of British Regulars, Loyalists, Tories and Indians, numbering one thousand persons, assembled on the Tioga; marched up along the eastern branches of the Susquehanna, and crossed thence to Schoharie, aided much in their progress by the intimate acquaintance of several of the men with the topography

of the country. They made a desolating march through the most fertile parts of the Schoharie settlements; and on the 17th October reached Fort Hunter in the Mohawk valley at the confluence of the Schoharie Creek and the Mohawk river. From thence they proceeded towards Caughnawaga; and on the night of the 18th, bivouacked in the vicinity of "THE NOSE," a point well known through the Mohawk valley.

INDIAN BARBARITIES.

On the memorable night of the 17th and the eventful morning of the 18th October, the devastating march of the enemy presented a spectacle of horror, of which it is impossible to give an adequate description. Both shores of the Mohawk were lighted up by the conflagration of houses, barns and stacks of hay and grain. The abundant crops upon which the commissariat of the illustrious head of the American army largely depended, were laid waste by the ruthless foe. No regard was had by the savages and Tories for age, or sex or station, and their deeds of barbarity are written "with the scalping knife and tomahawk in characters of blood." The loud cries of terrified children; the sad moanings of aged and helpless men and women, as they saw their once fair homes wrapped in flames and themselves doomed to a fearful death; the piteous pleadings of mothers for their own lives, and for the lives of their infants, as they lay in their cradles unconscious of the cruel fate that awaited them, were alike unheeded by the murderous savage and the unfeeling Tory. These events furnish as dark a page in the story of human woes as that presented by the massacres at Cherry Valley and Wyoming.

It is difficult even at this day to suppress the feelings of indignation, that will rise in our breasts at the thought of the inhumanity of the British Government in employing savages in the war with the colonists; and in putting into their hands the scalping knife and tomahawk to effect the work of subjugation, and we yet recoil with horror from the words of Lord Suffolk, the British Secretary of State, who declared openly in the House of Lords,

that "the measure" for the employment of savages was "allowable on principle."

Soon after the news of the invasion of Schoharie reached Governor Clinton at Albany, in obedience to orders, General Robert Van Rensselaer, who commanded the Claverack, Albany and 'Schenectady militia, started in the pursuit of the invading army. On the night of the 18th October, he encamped (as stated by the author of *The Life of Brandt*,) at "VAN EPS" now Fultonville, about nine miles, or (as stated by the author of *The Frontiersmen of New York*,) on a hill near "The STANTON PLACE," in the present town of Florida, about fourteen or fifteen miles east of the enemy's encampment.

General Van Rensselaer now learning that Fort Paris, at Stone Arabia, was to be assaulted on the next morning by Johnson's forces, dispatched a messenger to the commander of the fort with orders for him to march out on the morning of the 19th, at nine o'clock, and attack the invaders, while at the same time he would assist him by falling upon the rear of the enemy.

BROWN COMMANDER OF FORT PARIS.

Colonel John Brown was now in the command of Fort Paris with a force of two hundred and fifty, or (as stated by the author of *The History of Pittsfield*,) of three hundred men consisting mostly of New England Levies. This number comprised a few militiamen and volunteers from Palatine and the adjoining towns. Colonel Brown had a few weeks previously been at Albany, and while there, was offered the command of Fort Paris, which he readily accepted. The Fort was situated about three miles north of the Mohawk river, and the present village of Palatine Bridge.

BATTLE OF STONE ARABIA.

Early on the morning of the 19th October, Sir John Johnson, with his army, forded the Mohawk at KEATOR'S RIFTS, near the present village of Spraker's Basin; and then made a desolating

march in the direction of Stone Arabia with the intention of attacking Fort Paris.

The hour had now nearly arrived when the little band of Colonel Brown, in pursuance of the orders of General Van Rensselaer was to march out of the Fort to meet the enemy. It is related, that at about this time several of Brown's officers remonstrated with him against the ordered movement, regarding it as exceedingly injudicious; and that one of the men, well known as a brave soldier, addressed the commander in language of solemn warning, and recited the particulars of a remarkable dream that occurred to him on the night of the 18th, full of fearful forebodings. But the brave Colonel, it seems, had little faith in dreams or supernatural apparitions. No evil genius had appeared to him on the previous night, as is related to have appeared to Marcus Brutus on a certain night before the memorable battle on the plains of Philippi.

And ever prompt in obeying the orders of his superior officer, he gave no further heed to the soldier's dream, than did the first and greatest of the Cæsars to the dream of his wife, Calpurnia, or to the vaticinations of the soothsayer forewarning him of danger on the Ides of March.

DEATH OF COLONEL BROWN.

Everything being in readiness, at nine o'clock in the morning of the 19th October, Colonel Brown and his men sallied forth from Fort Paris to meet the enemy.

They marched towards Fort Keyser, a little stockade situated a mile and a half from the Mohawk river, which stockade they soon passed. After they had proceeded a short distance further one of Colonel Brown's volunteers discovered an Indian (who was less wary than others of his tribe) pursuing two women as they were fleeing from their homes. The Indian discharged his musket at one of the women. The woman fell, and as he ran to scalp her the fire of the brave volunteer brought the savage to the earth.

A destructive fire was then opened upon the soldiers of Brown, which though returned by them with great spirit, was on account of their exposed condition less effective than that of the enemy. Brown maintained his position for a time with his characteristic bravery; but finding eventually, that he was attacked by overwhelming numbers, who were gaining upon his flank, and that the army of Van Rensselaer did not come up as promised to assist him in the battle, he ordered a retreat, when he was shot through the heart by a musket ball from the enemy and fell lifeless to the earth.

Colonel Brown, according to tradition, was mounted during the engagement on a black horse and fell about one hour after he had left the Fort. With his fine person, his official uniform, and his superior military bearing, he was a conspicuous mark for the muskets of the British Regulars and Indians. He fell in battle on the very day he attained the age of thirty-six years, so that the anniversary of his birth was also the day of his death. The savages, while his life blood was yet oozing warm from his heart, gathered around his body making the place hideous with their exultant yells. They tore off his scalp. They stripped his body of every article of clothing except his ruffled shirt, and then left his body where it had fallen in this bloody encounter.

About forty-five of Colonel Brown's men were slain and scalped. The remainder of his troops, overpowered by numbers, dispersed and sought safety in flight. A few of his men fled towards Fort Rensselaer, a pallisaded stone house, on the south side of the Mohawk river, yet standing in Canajoharie village. Others found places of concealment in the adjoining woods. It is related that six of the men took shelter behind a large rock from which they continued to discharge their muskets at the enemy until all of the men were slain.

We have not sufficient data on which we can form a reliable estimate of the number of Johnson's men that fell during the engagement. We have traditions however, that of the British Regulars a few then fought their last battle; that of the savages a

much larger number than for the last time sounded the hideous war-whoop, and that of the Tories not a few were then doomed to

“ Go down

To the vile earth from whence they sprung,

Unwept, unhonored and unsung.”

After the battle, the army of Johnson was divided into small bands which marched through Stone Arabia during the afternoon engaged in the further destruction of the settlements. Several of them were composed mostly of Tories and Indians, incarnate devils, who delighted in deeds of murder and laughed at the shrieks of the victims of their cruelty. These bands continued their work of devastation and death until they were reunited by Johnson, who then marched them to the river road east of the Garoga Creek.

The enemy were hardly out of sight when four young militiamen, who had escaped the scalping knives and tomahawks of the savages, came out of their lurking-places, took up the body of their fallen commander, and bore it in their arms to Fort Keyser, which had not been assaulted by the enemy. On the next day the bodies of Colonel Brown and the soldiers killed in the engagement, mostly of the New England Levies, were buried in a pit near Fort Paris. Two or three days afterwards the pit was opened, and the body of Colonel Brown was removed to a place of interment about three hundred yards west of the Reformed Dutch Church of Stone Arabia; and there now repose the remains of one of the noblest and bravest defenders of the Mohawk valley.

“ New England’s dead! New England’s dead!

On every hill they lie;

* * * * *

Each valley where the battle pour’d

Its red and awful tide,

Beheld the brave New England sword

With slaughter deeply dyed.

Their bones are on the northern hill

And on the southern plain;

By brook and river, lake and rill

And by the roaring main.”

It may be supposed here that Colonel Brown did not exercise a proper degree of caution while marching down towards the Mohawk river to attack the enemy, and was therefore ambuscaded by the Indians, as was the imperious Braddock near the Fords of the Monongahela, or as was the brave and heroic Herkimer at the Battle of Oriskany. The wily Indians, who thought nothing properly done, unless done by stratagem; whose art of war consisted chiefly of the "art of surprise," whose crafty spirits forbade them from engaging in open warfare with an opposing force, and who regarded the scalp as their most valuable trophy, in great wariness had lain in ambush for the detachment of Colonel Brown. It would hardly be proper at this late day, with the somewhat conflicting statements of the survivors of this engagement, and when we have to rely so much on tradition, to employ words of censure against Colonel Brown for his conduct on the morning of the 19th October. His movements hitherto had been characterized by good judgment and a commendable degree of circumspectness. His march after sallying forth from Fort Paris was through a section of country yet densely covered with woods, passing through which he would be greatly exposed to the perils of ambuscade.

GENERAL VAN RENSSELAER'S DILATORY MOVEMENTS.

He had every reason to believe that General Van Rensselaer would be present, as promised, with his forces and fall upon the rear of the enemy. But General Van Rensselaer, for some cause that has never yet been explained, failed to come up to the support of Colonel Brown, and it is quite obvious that he was not like the gallant Hotspur, impatient for the fight. Early in the evening of the 18th October, he was probably not more than *nine*, and certainly not more than *fifteen* miles from the enemy's encampment. He had a force about double that of the enemy, and as the enemy's force did not move during the night of the 18th, General Van Rensselaer could easily have overtaken the invaders before they reached the battle-field. A competent, a prompt and an intrepid

commander would have done so, and thus averted the fall of Brown and the loss of a part of his heroic band. This was the concurrent opinion, so far as known, of the survivors of the battle. But this commander, instead of advancing with all due promptness to the relief of Colonel Brown, moved along tardily in the direction of the enemy's forces and arrived at Canajoharie, nearly opposite to, and about two miles distant from the battle-ground, while the shrill war cry of the savages engaged in deeds of blood could yet be heard, and while the hills of Palatine were yet reverberating with the roar of musketry. It does not appear that General Van Rensselaer made any effort during the morning of the 19th to cross over to the north side of the Mohawk with his troops, but he *succeeded*, according to several accounts, in reaching Fort Plain, three miles west of Canajoharie, in time to accept an invitation to dine with a military friend. If we may charitably suppose that he purposed, on the morning of the engagement, to move with all due speed to the support of Colonel Brown, yet it is certain he "made haste slowly." It is due, however, to the memory of General Van Rensselaer to state that at a court of inquiry, held at Albany on the 12th March, 1781, he was exonerated from all blame for his conduct on the 19th day of October, 1780. But that court, like all other earthly tribunals, was by no means infallible, and its decision was not only non-concurred in by a majority of his cotemporaries, but has since been completely reversed by the judgment of posterity.

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS.

Colonel Brown had a noble person, was an accomplished scholar, fond of elegant literature, and gifted with talents of a high order. He was pure in his morals, winning in his address, and greatly respected and beloved by the officers of the American army. One of his most attached friends was the lamented Montgomery. Having engaged early in life in the service of his country, at his country's call he was ready to march to battle and to death. He was as true a patriot as ever raised his voice, and as intrepid a soldier

as ever drew his sword in the defense of liberty. He did not live to see the united colonies enrolled among the free and independent nations of the earth, but he knew much of American prowess, for he had been in the storm and tempest of battle, and never doubted the final triumph of the American arms. He had an active mind, a chivalric nature, and a passionate fondness for adventurous enterprises. His remarkable geniality of disposition often led him to indulge in pleasantries, and he was inclined to be very observant of whatever in this world was rare and peculiar.

Lossing in his *Field Book of the Revolution* relates the following occurrence: "While on his way to the Mohawk river, Colonel Brown called on Ann Lee, the founder of the sect of American Shakers, and told her by way of pleasantry that on his return he would join her society. A fortnight after he fell in battle two members of the society waited on his widow, and told her that her husband in spirit had joined mother Ann; and that he had given express directions for her to become a member of the society. But his widow was not to be duped by their representations, and bade them begone." If Colonel Brown really had the interview referred to with mother Ann, how little was he then aware that he was so soon to be numbered with the martyr-heroes of the Mohawk Valley.

MONUMENT TO COLONEL BROWN.

On the 19th day of October, 1836, fifty-six years after the death of Colonel Brown a monument was erected by filial piety over his remains, which, (as already stated), were deposited a few days after the battle in a place of interment a little west of the Reformed Dutch Church of Stone Arabia. A son of Colonel Brown, (Henry Brown), then sheriff of Berkshire County, Massachusetts, a gentleman of dignified presence, and said to bear a strong personal resemblance to his father, was present on the occasion, but died soon afterwards, leaving to a large circle of relatives and friends an honorable record and an unsullied name.

The monument bears the following inscription :

"IN MEMORY OF COL. JOHN BROWN,
WHO WAS KILLED IN BATTLE ON THE 19TH DAY OF OCTOBER, 1780,
AT PALATINE, IN THE COUNTY OF MONTGOMERY.
AGED 36."

After the ceremony of raising the monument, a sermon was preached by the Reverend Abraham N. Van Horne, of Caughnawaga. And very appropriately 'was this aged and respected clergyman called at this time to officiate, for he had conducted the religious services (from 1795 to 1832), in the Stone Church at that place, the same venerable structure in which Colonel Brown was a worshipper when a practicing lawyer in this valley. The sermon was followed by an address from him, who then spoke (as he this evening, after the elapse of so many years, again speaks) of the memorable events that occurred in the Mohawk valley in the fall of 1780; and your speaker yet well remembers how deep were the emotions of the dutiful son as he stood by the grave of his honored father, and in the exercise of filial love and piety paid to his memory the tributary tear.

The presence of the son of Colonel Brown, and also of a few of the brave volunteers, survivors of the battle of Stone Arabia, added much to the interest of the occasion. These volunteers were then octogenarians, or what is more probable, each of them had then attained an age exceeding that of four score years.

They never spoke of their former commander, but with feelings of deep emotion. His manly and soldierly bearing; his uniform kindness to his men, and his words of patriotic cheer as they were about to march against the invaders, were to them ever welcome themes in their declining years, and seemed to be ever fresh in their memories.

I trust it will be pardonable in me in this connection to present a few passages from the address (already referred to) delivered on the occasion of the erection of the monument to Colonel Brown. "I now see before me a little remnant of those intrepid spirits who

fought in the memorable engagement of October 19th, 1780. Fifty-six years ago this day, led on by your gallant commander, you battled with greatly superior numbers, consisting of British Regulars, loyalists and savages.

“Venerable patriots! We bid you welcome here this day. In the name of our country, we thank you for the services you rendered her in the darkest days of the Revolution. Be assured they will be held in grateful remembrance while the Mohawk shall continue to wind its course through yonder rich and fertile valley. They will be the theme of praise, long after the marble erected this day to the memory of your brave commander, shall have crumbled to dust. Look! look around you! The field! the field is before us on which the heroic Brown poured out his life blood in the defense of his country's liberties. You fought by his side. You saw him as he fell in battle with his face to the foe. You bore his bleeding and lifeless body from the battle field. With gentle hands, and sorrowing hearts you committed his remains to the earth and

“Carved not a line and raised not a stone,
But left him alone in his glory.”

At the Berkshire jubilee, held at Pittsfield, August 23, 1844, Governor Briggs, of Massachusetts, in referring to Colonel Brown, said: “You know the history of John Brown. He sleeps at Stone Arabia where he fell in that murderous attack of the Indians upon the Mohawk. And he sleeps not there alone. Many a Berkshire boy fell with him. From our little sister town of Lanesborough three of her sons perished in that bloody conflict. Many a Berkshire mother's heart sunk within her at the news of that day's work.”

CONCLUSION.

In bringing this imperfect account of the civil and military career of Colonel Brown to a close, I may add very briefly:

The beautiful and magnificent valley of the Mohawk is well known historic ground, for its battle fields have been signalized by martial achievements, that have conferred lasting renown upon the country. Its soil has been baptized with the blood, and consecrated by the ashes of Revolutionary patriots, among whom, Colonel Brown deserves conspicuous mention. The citizens of this valley will ever delight to do honor to his memory, and the sad story of his death on the battle field of Stone Arabia, will never be told without awakening in their bosoms greater love for their native land, and for the institutions of their fathers. They will ever speak gratefully of him who at the time of our country's tribulation left his home in New England, to engage in deadly strife with savages along the Mohawk, and fell while nobly battling in the cause of liberty.

“ Ah ! never shall the land forget,
How gushed the life blood of her brave;
Gushed warm with hope and courage yet
Upon the soil they fought to save.”



